

16 January 2025

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 27 November 2024, in which you asked for:

Internal policy documents and official publications that detail the following:

- 1. Policy governing how staff and contractors store firearms when staying at publicly accessible DOC huts. Include how these firearms are to be stored when at a hut.*
- 2. Any guidance related to how individual firearms owners who are lawfully hunting, should manage/store their firearms when staying in a hut.*
- 3. What advice did the firearms safety authority provide in the drafting of these documents.*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

- 1. Policy governing how staff and contractors store firearms when staying at publicly accessible DOC huts. Include how these firearms are to be stored when at a hut.*

The DOC Firearms Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides procedures and standards for DOC staff and contractors working with firearms in the course of DOC work. The following SOP section applies to storage during operations on public conservation land or elsewhere:

“When using firearms on public conservation land or other locations the security of a firearm is the sole responsibility of the firearm owner/user (DOC employee or contractor). When the securing of a firearm is required because it will not always be in the immediate possession of the user, such as when using DOC huts overnight, the following must be observed:

- Where able a bolt, or other vital part must be removed from the firearm to make it inoperable and must be retained by the firearm user on their person.*

- *Where a firearm cannot be easily made inoperable, a trigger lock or something similar must be applied, and the key retained by the firearm user on their person.*
 - *The firearm shall not be put in such a place that a young child has ready access to it.*
 - *The firearm user shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the ammunition is not stored in such a way that a person who obtains access to the firearm also obtains access to the ammunition.*
 - *The firearm user shall take reasonable steps to ensure that any firearm in the holder's possession is secured against theft."*
2. *Any guidance related to how individual firearms owners who are lawfully hunting, should manage/store their firearms when staying in a hut.*

The "Hunting Safety" page on the DOC website directs hunters to the Firearms Safety Code available on the Firearms Safety Authority website, and to the 7 rules of Firearms Safety. A "hunting in conservation areas" brochure is also provided through a link on this page. This specifies that hunters must "Follow the Arms Code – always unload firearms before reaching a hut and never leave firearms unattended". This information can be found here <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/hunting-and-firearms-safety/hunting-basics/>.

3. *What advice did the firearms safety authority provide in the drafting of these documents.*

The Firearms Safety Authority as a business group of NZ Police was launched in November 2022, and the DOC Firearms SOP was finalised and approved for release to DOC staff in April 2022. As the SOP was released prior to the existence of the Firearms Safety Authority, the authority did not provide any advice. The Department is in the process of reviewing this SOP for minor updates and improvements, and the Firearms Safety Authority will provide advice on the draft of this revised document prior to release in DOC.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

If you would like to discuss this response with us, please contact Mike Perry, Wild Animals Manager by email to mperry@doc.govt.nz

Nāku noa, nā

Ben Reddiex
Director National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai